

Briefs

Specialty Crops

Smaller 2001 U.S. Pear Crop To Boost Prices

An overall slump in pear production this year, coinciding with decreased supplies of domestically grown apples, points to higher grower prices for fresh-market pears in 2001/02. Total U.S. pear production for 2001 is forecast down 5 percent from 2000 to 1.8 billion pounds.

For the second consecutive year, the harvest of Bartlett pears is projected to decline, and at 946 million pounds would be 9 percent smaller than a year ago and 19 percent below 1999. Combined production of other U.S. pear varieties is forecast at 885 million pounds, down 1 percent.

Nearly all the Bartlett pears in the U.S. are grown in California, Oregon, and Washington. Production of Bartlett pears, used mostly for processing, is expected to fall 18 percent in California and by 3 percent in Oregon. Frost and hail affected California's production during the early spring, while Oregon's production experienced mild frost damage. In Washington, where production rose 5 percent, growing conditions were generally favorable—although below-average rainfall concerned growers.

U.S. production of other-than-Bartlett pears declined only slightly. Downturns for other-than-Bartlett production are reported in minor pear-producing states—Colorado (down 33 percent), Connecticut (down 68 percent), and New York (down 31 percent). Although production declines are sharp in these three states, other-than-Bartlett crops were unchanged in each of the three major Pacific Coast states that account for over 90 percent of the Nation's other-than-Bartlett production.

The overall decline in production this year, combined with depletion of carry-in stocks, will help boost grower prices during the 2001/02 marketing season. As of June 30, 2001—the end of the 2000/01 marketing season—stocks of both Bartlett and other pear varieties were already exhausted. For the new season thus far

(July-August), grower prices for fresh pears averaged \$552 per ton, compared with \$242 per ton during the same period a year ago.

Although overall production slid last year, more pears were sent to the fresh market, including some processing pears that were diverted into fresh use. Increased fresh-market supplies have put downward pressure on fresh-market grower prices. Fresh pear prices were lower through most of the 2000/01 season. However, seasonal supply decreases and smaller crops of summer fruit such as peaches, strawberries, and most citrus boosted end-of-season prices. The 2000 season-average grower price for fresh pears dipped 19 percent from the previous year, to 15.9 cents per pound, the lowest over the last 6 years.

Meanwhile, diversion of some processing pears to the fresh-market sector aided in strengthening prices of processing pears. The total quantity of processed pears was down 16 percent last year, to 804.1 million pounds. The 2000 season-average grower price for processing pears averaged \$190 per ton, 3 percent higher than the previous year.

Returns to growers in 2000 were lower than in the previous year, but foreign demand for U.S. pears has fluctuated, due to increased fresh-market supplies, lower fresh pear prices, and high quality of the fruit. Exports have become increasingly important to the U.S. pear industry; over the last 5 years, an average 18 percent of the U.S. pear crop was shipped to foreign markets, compared with about 8 percent during the mid- to late 1980s.

In the fresh-market sector alone, export share of production has doubled in recent years compared with the mid- to late 1980s, to over 30 percent. U.S. exports of fresh pears during 2000/01 (July-June) rose 10 percent from the previous season, while imports declined 6 percent. Fresh export shipments to most primary markets rose, especially to Mexico, Brazil, and

Venezuela, although shipments to Canada declined. Exports are also benefiting from improving Asian economies and continued U.S. promotion efforts. Exports to the three largest U.S. fresh pear markets in Asia—Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—were strong.

In July 2001, exports of fresh pears totaled 11.9 million pounds, down 49 percent from July 2000. While further supplies of high-quality fruit as well as market promotion efforts should continue to boost U.S. pear sales in foreign markets, lower U.S. fresh-market supplies anticipated this year, along with expectations of higher prices, will likely limit U.S. export prospects during 2001/02. **AO**

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Upcoming Reports—USDA's Economic Research Service

The following reports are issued electronically at the times indicated.

November

- 9 World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates (8:30 a.m.)
- 13 Oil Crops Outlook (4 p.m.)**
- 14 Feed Outlook (9 a.m.)**
- 14 Wheat Outlook (9 a.m.)**
- 15 Vegetables and Specialties Outlook†
- 19 Fruit and Tree Nuts Outlook††
- 20 Agricultural Outlook*
- 26 Foreign Agricultural Trade of the United States (FATUS)/U.S. Agricultural Trade Update (3 p.m.)
- 27 Cotton and Wool Yearbook (3 p.m.)*
- 28 Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Situation and Outlook (4 p.m.)**
- 29 Rice Yearbook (3 p.m.)*
- 30 Outlook for U.S. Agricultural Trade (3 p.m.)

*Release of summary, 3 p.m.

**Available electronically only.

†Summary of final issue in the Situation and Outlook series covering vegetables, specialties, and melons. In 2002, the every-other-month electronic-only newsletter will replace it.

††Second issue of the every-other-month electronic-only newsletter that will completely replace the Situation and Outlook series on fruit and tree nuts in 2002.